



Hank In The Way Soap Company owner Emily Oden, left, and silent partner Jackie Haff.

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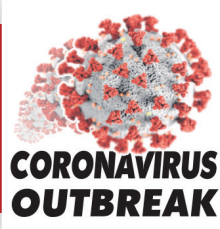
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COVID-19



Positivity rate places Grant County in 'Extreme Risk' category

Ten new cases reported since last Wednesday for a total of 137

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County reported three more COVID-19 cases Tuesday, bringing the county's case count up to 137.

As the county prepares to be in the "Extreme Risk" category of Gov. Kate Brown's new metrics announced last week, Public Health Administrator Kimberly Lindsay said the metric that put Grant County on that list is its positivity rate from Nov. 15, 16.8%. The previous week, the rate was 1%, while it was 6.2% and 7.5% going back to the week of Oct. 25.

Lindsay said the state's data does not match the health department's positivity rate, and the health department is looking into it.

Lindsay said another important metric the public should be concerned with is local hospital capacity.

As of Nov. 30, in Grant County's Region 7, shared with Deschutes, Harney, Klamath, Jefferson, Lake and Wheeler counties, Lindsay said 48 COVID-19 patients were being hospitalized — the highest single-day count since the start of the pandemic. Nine of the 48 people were in intensive care units, she said, and two were on ventilators.

Lindsay said there were eight available ICU hospital beds in the region and 152 in the state. She told the Eagle hospital staffing remains a concern across the state.

Blue Mountain Hospital, she said, struggled with staffing due to the outbreak of a few weeks ago. While there were no services the hospital could not offer, she said they would have been

COVID-19 TESTING

The Grant County Health Department is open and offering testing Mondays through Thursdays.

Testing hours this week are from 3-4 p.m. through Thursday.

Starting Dec. 17, the health department will test from 2-4 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays.

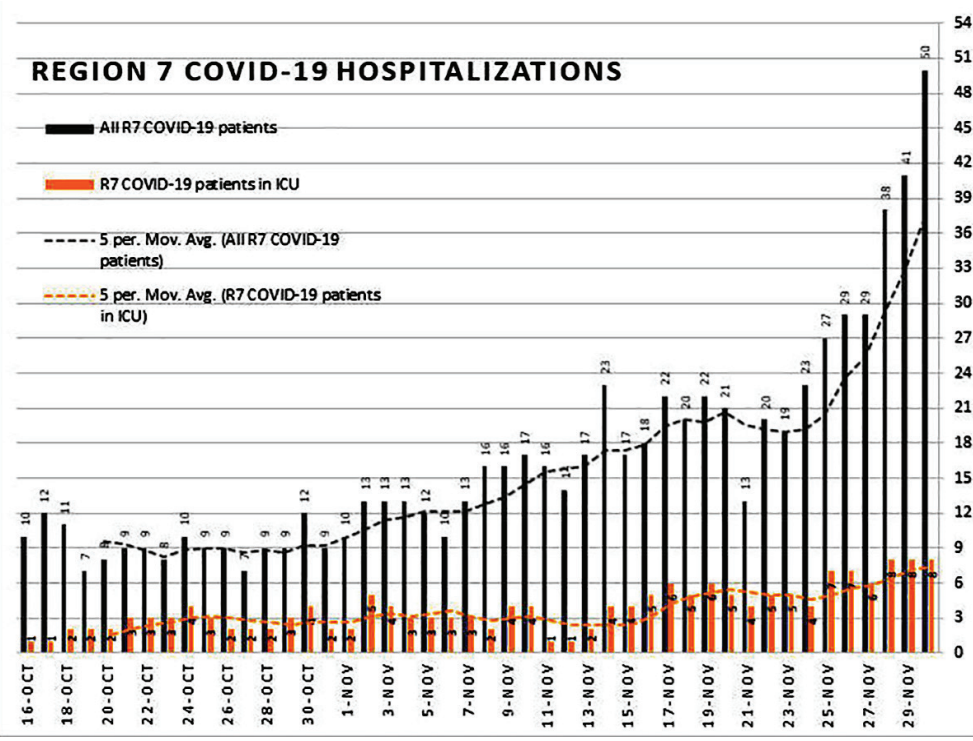
Testing is by appointment only.

When possible, the health department will bill insurance. When someone does not have insurance, they will administer the test at no charge.



Eagle file photo

Kimberly Lindsay, Grant County public health administrator, addresses a session of Grant County Court.



Contributed image

COVID-19 hospitalizations in Grant County's region have reached record highs.

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Brown extends restrictions on 21 counties to fight rise in infections

By Gary A. Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

With COVID-19 infection rates rising rapidly in Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown said Nov. 25 that at least 21 counties will stay in a modified version of the two-week "freeze" through most of December.

The limits on gatherings, businesses and services put in place Nov. 18 by executive order were set to end on Dec. 3 in all but Multnomah County, including Portland.

Instead, Brown announced a new four-level risk assessment plan will be put in place after the current freeze ends.

Most of the most populous counties in the state will be in the "Extreme Risk" categories with the most stringent restrictions.

Each county will be rated and told what is allowed and what is barred for the next two weeks. The status will be reviewed by the Oregon Health Department and counties can move on or off the list. Counties will move incrementally, which means a county on the "Extreme Risk" list would go through two-week periods at "High Risk," "Moderate Risk" and "Low Risk."

"My goal here is to protect Oregonians across the state," Brown said. "A one-size-fits-all approach does not make sense to me going forward."

The order came amid a spike in cases as more Oregonians planned travel during the Thanksgiving and upcoming Christmas holidays.

Adding to concerns are the winter holidays. The Transportation Security Administration reported over three million people passing through airport security over the past weekend, the most since March. Canada celebrates Thanksgiving in mid-October and, despite similar warnings about traveling, saw a doubling of daily cases by the first week of November.



File photo

Gov. Kate Brown imposed new restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19.

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COVID-19 allocations spent mostly on technology

Cities have until the end of the year to make expenditures

"WE DON'T KNOW HOW LONG THIS IS GOING TO GO. RIGHT NOW OUR TECHNOLOGY FOR VIDEO CONFERENCING IS OUTDATED."

—Dorothy Jordan, Monument city recorder

By Rudy Diaz and Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County cities with a population of 750 or more received \$50,000 in COVID-19 relief funds. Those with fewer than 750 people received \$25,000. Here is a rundown of how those cities plan to spend the money.

Roughly \$200 million of the \$1.64 billion Congress sent the state in March through the CARES Act to help pay for pandemic-related expenses requires the money to respond to the public health emergency, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.

Expenses have to be unexpected and not accounted for in a budget as of March 27, when the CARES Act became law. For a cost to be eligi-



Don Porter



Jim Hamsher



Kenny Delano



Ruthie Moore

ble, it must occur between March 1 and Dec. 30, 2020. Local governments have until the end of the year to spend the money.

John Day

The state awarded John Day with up to \$52,796 in COVID-19 relief funds. The city requested reimbursements for personal protective equipment and public safety measures to

implement at John Day's city hall for just over \$6,800, according to the city's newsletter released in October.

About \$30,000 was delegated to improve broadband support at Humbolt Elementary School and for food security initiatives that included the Grant County Fairgrounds Livestock Auction, the John Day Farmers Market and COVID-19-related cost recov-

ery at John Day's greenhouse.

By extending fiber optic line to Humbolt, which experiences problems with connectivity, teachers can facilitate more lessons from the school.

"We're excited about moving forward with getting fiber into Humbolt," Grant School District 3 superintendent Bret Uptmor said during a school board meeting in August. "Last year we did Grant Union, and it did help with our distance learning, where Humbolt, they would not be able to do any distance learning."

Another \$15,500 was committed to Grant County Coworks, a facility dedicated to providing public broadband access and a shared working space in John Day.

Prairie City

Jim Hamsher, Grant County Commissioner and Prairie City mayor, said the city received \$50,000.

Hamsher said the city put half of the money into a grant program for small businesses and sole proprietors impacted by the coronavirus.

The program is available through Dec. 18 or until funds are fully deployed, whichever comes first. The applications can be filled out online at communitylendingworks.org/emergency-grants-grant-county.

Hamsher said the other \$25,000 would be set aside for a grant program for residents who cannot afford to pay their utility bill.

Mt. Vernon

Mt. Vernon Mayor Kenny Delano said the city purchased laptops

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